

*(Trans)Gendered Body
Modifications as Narcissistic Self
Regard*

IN THE UK GENDER SYSTEM

- Transsexualism (also known as Gender Identity Disorder, Transgenderism and Gender Dysphoria). Represents a desire to live and be accepted as a member of another sex, usually accompanied by a sense of discomfort with one's anatomic sex and a wish to have hormonal treatment and surgery to make one's body as congruent as possible with the preferred sex (Press for Change 2005).

- “happy to take Michael Jackson’s money for repeated plastic surgeries to make his appearance less ‘black’ [without a] diagnosis of ‘transracialism’ for white people trapped in black bodies. Similarly, although they will cut, inject, staple, peel and burn you to help you appear younger, there is no theory of the aetiology of ‘transaegism’ to explain how such a young person came to be wrongfully imprisoned in an old person’s body. Gender seems to be the only paradigm of difference within which the ‘self’ is authoritatively permitted to be at odds with the ‘body’” (Wilton 2000: 242)

Hypothesis

- My tentative hypothesis is that there is in people, a narcissistic attempt to align the ego with body image and cultural demands in a similar vain to how Transmen and Transwomen align their cultural demands, body image and ego. Thus, making the Transperson unremarkable, in the sense that the aesthetic, technological and surgical steps undertaken by the Transperson is no more pathological than any other people who create an image aesthetically, alter their bodies through technology and cosmetic procedures. It is simply an attempt to forge the ego, body image and cultural demands in such a way as to have a tangible future.

- “person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated—who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities” {Freud, 1957: 72}.

- “we must recognize that self-regard has a special intimate dependence on narcissistic libido” {Freud Cited in Pulver, 1986:103}.

- “[n]arcissism then in the sense of self-esteem would not be a perversion but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self preservation” {Freud, 1991: 73f}.#
- #The word ‘instinct’ is highly problematic, however, Freud tended to use the German word *triebe*, which means ‘drive’ which was erroneously translated into the English as ‘instinct.’

- “a libidinal investment of the self” {Freud, 1991}.

- “the existence of an overt or latent state of pain which has constantly to be dealt with by the ego; and the defensive and adaptive manoeuvres which are responses to it” {Joffe & Sandler 1967: 65}.

- So, why can we not take it as a conflation of both, as a drive mechanism (a compulsion) that has as its yardstick an ideal self, which I am proposing as how we should consider narcissism in relation to Transpeople?

- Radcliff says:
- with each change I thought my body is normalising. I didn't think that it was the hormones even though I know they caused it, as far as I was concerned my body was just settling down.

- Faye says:
- well my body wasn't in line, which caused a lot of issues. So to have the surgery and the secondary sexual characteristics, provided by the hormones, has helped me have a lot more confidence in myself. I am no longer looking in the mirror and fighting against myself [...]. That has released a lot of pressure and having a body, such as it is [now], has changed me; it has made me much more relaxed, much more carefree and much more pleased with myself, which is great.

- “inner ‘institution’ [that has] evolved to safeguard that order within individuals on which all outer order depends” {Erikson, 1950: 188}.

- “early narcissistic fantasies of power and greatness [have] not been opposed by sudden premature experiences of traumatic disappointment but [have] been gradually integrated into the ego’s reality orientated organization” {Kohut, 1986: 70}.

- “libidinal investment of the self [which] is, *per se* neither pathological nor obnoxious” {Kohut, 1986}.

- Amy states:
- I think that you do latch on to some stereotypical things when you transition because you are so uncertain about your own gender and other people's gender for such a long time and you find yourself relying on the same visual keys that the rest of society relies on.

- “will be enhanced by investigating the general sense-making phenomenology and style adaptation chosen by transsexual individuals. Such research and analysis is necessary in order to add depth to the [sexological] literature, which up to now, has emphasised etiology and psychopathological categorization” (Flemming, Costos and MacGowan 1984: 592)